
Manifesto and Program of the Left Wing Section Socialist Party, Local Greater New York.

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The great bulk of the text here dates from January of 1919.

“Proletarian revolutions, such as those of the nineteenth century, criticize themselves constantly; constantly interrupt themselves in their own course; come back, to what seems to have been accomplished, in order to start over anew; scorn with cruel thoroughness the half measures, weaknesses, and meannesses of their first attempts; seem to throw down their adversary only in order to enable him to draw fresh strength from the earth, and again to rise up against them in more gigantic stature; constantly recoil in fear before the undefined monster magnitude of their own objects — until finally that situation is created which renders all retreat impossible, and the conditions themselves cry out: *‘Hic Rhodus, hic salta!’*”

—Karl Marx, *Eighteenth Brumaire*.

“Between the capitalistic society and the communistic lies the period of the revolutionary transformation of the one into the other. This corresponds to a political transition-period, in which the state cannot be anything else but the dictatorship of the proletariat. Now the 1875 program has neither anything to do with the latter, nor with the future state of the communistic society. It’s political demands contain nothing outside of the old democratic litany, known to all the world — universal franchise, direct legislation, popular rights, protection of the people, etc. It is simply an echo of the old People’s Party, the Peace and Liberty Alliance.”

—Karl Marx, *Critique of the Gotha Program*, 1875.

The members of the Socialist Party are entitled to an explanation for the issuance of this pamphlet by the Left Wing Section.

We are a very active and growing section of the Socialist Party which is attempting to reach the rank and file with our urgent message over the heads of the powers that be, who, through inertia or a lack of vision, cannot see the necessity for a critical analysis of the party's policies and tactics.

The official Socialist Party press is in the main closed to us; therefore we cannot adequately present our side of the case.

In the various discussions that arise wherever party members or delegates assemble, both sides grow too heated for calm, dispassionate judgment.

Therefore we have decided to issue our Manifesto and Program in pamphlet form, so that the rank and file may read and judge our case on its merits.

Comrades — and this is addressed to members of the party — the situation is such that a careful study of our position is absolutely imperative.

Manifesto.

Prior to August 1914, the nations of the world lived on a volcano. Violent eruptions from time to time gave warning of the cataclysm to come, but the diplomats and statesmen managed to localize the outbreaks, and the masses, slightly aroused, sank back into their accustomed lethargy with doubts and misgivings, and the subterranean fires continued to smoulder.

Many trusted blindly — some in their statesmen, some in the cohesive power of Christianity, their common religion, and some in the growing strength of the international Socialist movement. Had not the German Social-Democracy exchanged dramatic telegrams with the French Socialist Party, each pledging itself not to fight in case their governments declared war on each other! A general strike of workers led by these determined Socialists would quickly bring the governments to their senses!

So the workers reasoned, until the thunderclap of Sarajevo and Austria's ultimatum to Serbia. Then, suddenly, the storm broke. Mobilization everywhere.

Everywhere declarations of war. In three or four days Europe was in arms.

The present structure of society — Capitalism — with its pretensions to democracy on the one hand, and its commercial rivalries, armament rings, and standing armies on the other, all based on the exploitation of the working class and the division of the loot, was cast into the furnace of the war. Two things only could issue forth: either international capitalist control, through a League of Nations, or Social Revolution and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat. Both of these forms are today contending for world power.

The Social Democracies of Europe, unable or unwilling to meet the crisis, were themselves hurled into the conflagration, to be tempered and consumed by it.

The Collapse of the Second International.

Great demonstrations were held in every European country by Socialists protesting against their governments' declarations of war and mobilizations for war. And we know that these demonstrations were suddenly rendered impotent by the complete surrender of the Socialist parliamentary leaders and the official Socialist press, with their "justifications" of "defensive wars" and the safeguarding of "democracy."

Why the sudden change of front? Why did the Socialist leaders in the parliaments of the belligerents vote the war credits? Why did not Moderate Socialism carry out the policy of the Basle Manifesto, namely: the converting of an imperialist war into a civil war — into a proletarian revolution? Why did it either openly favor the war or adopt a policy of petty-bourgeois pacifism?

The Development of Moderate "Socialism."

In the latter part of the nineteenth century, the Social-Democracies of Europe set out to "legislate Capitalism out of office." The class struggle was to be won in the capitalist legislatures. Step by step concessions were to be wrested from the state; the working class and the Socialist parties were to be strengthened

by means of “constructive” reform and social legislation; each concession would act as a rung in the ladder of Social Revolution, upon which the workers could climb step by step, until finally, some bright, sunny morning, the peoples would awake to find the Cooperative Commonwealth functioning without disorder, confusion, or hitch on the ruins of the capitalist state.

But what happened? When a few legislative seats had been captured, the thunderous denunciations of the Socialist legislators suddenly ceased. No more were the parliaments used as platforms from which the challenge of revolutionary Socialism was flung to all corners of Europe. Another era had set in, the era of “constructive” social reform legislation. Dominant Moderate Socialism accepted the bourgeois state as the basis of its action and strengthened that state. All power to shape the policies and tactics of the Socialist parties was entrusted to the parliamentary leaders. And these lost sight of Socialism’s original purpose; their goal became “constructive reforms” and cabinet portfolios — the “cooperation of classes,” the policy of openly or tacitly declaring that the coming of Socialism was a concern “of all the classes,” instead of emphasizing the Marxian policy that the construction of the Socialist system is the task of the revolutionary proletariat alone. “Moderate Socialism” accepted the bourgeois state as the leaders, was now ready to share responsibility with the bourgeoisie in the control of the capitalist state, even to the extent of *defending the bourgeoisie against the working class* — as in the first Briand Ministry in France, when the official party press was opened to a defense of the shooting of striking railway workers at the order of the Socialist-Bourgeois Coalition Cabinet.

“Sausage Socialism.”

This situation was brought about by mixing the democratic cant of the eighteenth century with scientific Socialism. The result was what Rosa Luxemburg called “sausage Socialism.” The “Moderates” emphasized petty-bourgeois social reformism in order to attract tradesmen, shopkeepers, and members of the professions, and, of course, the latter flocked to the Socialist movement in great numbers, seeking relief from the constant grinding between corporate capital and awakening labor.

The Socialist organizations actively competed for votes, on the basis of social reforms, with the bourgeois-liberal political parties. And so they catered to the ignorance and prejudices of the workers, trading promises of immediate reforms for votes.

Dominant “moderate Socialism” forgot the teachings of the founders of scientific Socialism, forgot its function as a proletarian movement — “*the most resolute and advanced section of the working class parties*” — and permitted the bourgeois and self-seeking trade-union element to shape its policies and tactics. This was the condition in which the Social Democracies of Europe found themselves at the outbreak of war in 1914. Demoralized and confused by the cross-currents within their own parties, vacillating and compromising with the bourgeois state, they fell a prey to social-patriotism and nationalism.

Spartacides and Bolsheviki.

But revolutionary Socialism was not destined to lie inert for long. In Germany, Karl Liebknecht, Franz Mehring, Rosa Luxemburg, and Otto Ruhle organized the Spartacus group. But their voices were drowned in the roar of cannon and the shrieks of the dying and the maimed.

Russia, however, was to be the first battleground where “moderate” and revolutionary Socialism should come to grips for the mastery of the state. The breakdown of the corrupt, bureaucratic Tsarist regime opened the floodgates of Revolution.

Three main contending parties attempted to ride into power on the revolutionary tide: the Cadets, the “moderate Socialists” (Mensheviki and Social Revolutionists) and the revolutionary Socialists — the Bolsheviki. The Cadets were first to be swept into power; but they tried to stem the still-rising flood with a few abstract political ideals and were carried away. The soldiers, workers, and peasants could no longer be fooled by phrases. The Mensheviki and Social Revolutionaries succeeded the Cadets. And now came the crucial test: would they, in accord with Marxian teachings, make themselves the ruling class and sweep away the old conditions of production, and thus prepare the way for the Cooperative Commonwealth? Or would they tinker with the old machinery and try to foist it on the masses as something just as good?

They did the latter, and proved for all time that “moderate Socialism” can not be trusted.

“Moderate Socialism” was not prepared to seize the power for the workers during a revolution. “Moderate Socialism” had a rigid formula — “constructive social-reform legislation within the capitalist state,” and to that formula it clung. It believed that bourgeois democracy could be used as a means of constructing the socialist system; therefore, it must wait until the people, through a Constituent Assembly, should vote Socialism into existence. And in the meantime, it held that there must be established a Government of Coalition with the enemy, the bourgeoisie. As if, with all the means of controlling public opinion in the hands of the bourgeoisie, a Constituent Assembly could or would ever vote the Socialists into power!

Revolutionary Socialists hold, with the founders of scientific Socialism, that there are two dominant classes in society — the bourgeoisie and the proletariat; that between those two classes a struggle must go on, until the working class, through the seizure of the instruments of production and distribution, the abolition of the capitalist state, and the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat, creates a Socialist system. Revolutionary Socialists do not believe they can be voted into power. They struggle for the conquest of power by the revolutionary proletariat. Then comes the transition period from Capitalism to Socialism, of which Marx speaks in his *Critique of the Gotha Program*, when he says: “Between the capitalistic society and the communistic, lies the period of the revolutionary transformation of the one into the other. This corresponds to a political transition period, in which the state cannot be anything else but the dictatorship of the proletariat.”

Marx and Engels clearly explain the function of the socialist movement. It is the “moderate Socialists,” through intellectual gymnastics, evasions, misquotations, and the tearing of sentences and phrases from their context, who make Marx and Engels sponsors for their perverted version of Socialism.

Problems of American Socialism.

At the present moment, the Socialist Party of America is agitated by several cross-currents, some local in their character, and some a reflex of cleavages

within the European Socialist movements. Many see in this internal dissension merely an unimportant difference of opinion, or at most, dissatisfaction with the control of the party, and the desire to replace those who have misused it with better men.

We, however, maintain that there is a fundamental distinction in views concerning party policies and tactics. And we believe that this difference is so vast that from our standpoint a radical change in party policies and tactics is necessary.

This essential task is being shirked by our party leaders and officials generally.

Already there is formidable industrial unrest, a seething ferment of discontent, evidenced by inarticulate rumblings which presage striking occurrences. The transformation of industry from a war to a peace basis has thoroughly disorganized the economic structure. Thousands upon thousands of workers are being thrown out of work. Demobilized sailors and soldiers find themselves a drug on the labor market, unless they act as scabs and strikebreakers. Skilled mechanics, fighting desperately to maintain their war-wage and their industrial status, are forced to strike. Women, who during the war have been welcomed into industries hitherto closed to them are struggling to keep their jobs. And to cap the climax, the capitalists, through their Chambers of Commerce and their Merchants’ and Manufacturers’ Associations, have resolved to take advantage of the situation to break down even the inadequate organizations labor has built up through generations of painful struggle.

The temper of the workers and the soldiers, after the sacrifices they have made in the war, is such that they will not endure the reactionary labor conditions so openly advocated by the master class. A series of labor struggles is bound to follow — indeed, is beginning now. Shall the Socialist Party continue to feed the workers with social reform legislation at this critical period? Shall it approach the whole question from the standpoint of votes and the election of representatives to the legislature? Shall it emphasize the consumer’s point of view, when socialist principles teach that the worker is robbed at the point of production? Shall it talk about Cost of Living and Taxation, when it should be explaining how the worker is robbed at his job?

There are many signs of the awakening of labor.

Strikes are developing which verge on revolutionary action; the trade unions are organizing a Labor Party, in an effort to conserve what they have won and wrest new concessions from the master class. The organization of the Labor Party is an immature expression of a new spirit in the Labor movement; but a Labor Party is not the instrument for the emancipation of the working class; its policy would be in general what is now the official policy of the Socialist Party — reforming Capitalism on the basis of the bourgeois state. Laborism is as much a danger to the revolutionary proletariat as “moderate” Socialism; neither is an instrument for the conquest of power.

Capitalist Imperialism.

Imperialism is the final stage of Capitalism, in which the accumulated capital or surplus of a nation is too great to be reinvested in the home market. The increased productivity of the working class, due to improved machinery and efficiency methods, and the mere subsistence wage which permits the worker to buy back only a small portion of what he produces, causes an ever-increasing accumulation of commodities, which in turn become capital and must be invested in further production. When Capitalism has reached the stage in which it imports raw materials from underdeveloped countries and exports them again in the shape of manufactured products, it has reached its highest development.

This process is universal. Foreign markets, spheres of influence and protectorates, under the intensive development of capitalist industry and finance in turn become highly developed. They, too, seek the markets. National capitalist control, to save itself from ruin, breaks its national bonds and emerges full-grown as a capitalist League of Nations, with international armies and navies to maintain its supremacy.

The United States no longer holds itself aloof, isolated and provincial. It is reaching out for new markets, new zones of influence, new protectorates.

The capitalist class of America is using organized labor for its imperialistic purposes. We may soon expect the capitalist class, in true Bismarckian fashion, to grant factory laws, old age pensions, unemployment insurance, sick benefits, and the whole litter of bourgeois reforms, so that the workers may be kept fit to

produce the greatest profits at the greatest speed.

Dangers to American Socialism.

There is danger that the Socialist Party of America might make use of these purely bourgeois reforms to attract the workers' votes, by claiming that they are victories for Socialism, and that they have been won by Socialist political action; when, as a matter of fact, the object of these master class measures is to prevent the growing class consciousness of the workers, and to divert them from their revolutionary aim. By agitating for these reforms, therefore, the Socialist Party would be playing into the hands of our American imperialists.

On the basis of the class struggle, then, the Socialist Party of America must reorganize itself, must prepare to come to grips with the master class during the difficult period of capitalist readjustment now going on. This it can do only by teaching the working class the truth about present-day conditions; it must preach revolutionary industrial unionism, and urge all the workers to organize into industrial unions, the only form of labor organization which can cope with the power of great modern aggregations of capital. It must carry on its political campaigns, not merely as means of electing officials to political office, as in the past, but as a year-around educational campaign to arouse the workers to class-conscious economic and political actions, and to keep alive the burning ideal of revolution in the hearts of the people.

Political Action.

We assert with Marx that “*the class struggle is essentially a political struggle,*” and we can only accept his own oft-repeated interpretation of that phrase. The class struggle, whether it manifest itself on the industrial field or in the direct struggle for government control, is essentially a struggle for the capture and destruction of the capitalist state. This is a political act. In this broader view of the term “political,” Marx includes revolutionary industrial action. In other words, the objective of Socialist industrial action is also “political,” in the sense that it aims to undermine the state, which “*is nothing less than a machine for the oppression of one class by another and that no less so in a democratic*

republic than under a monarchy.”

Political action is also and more generally used to refer to participation in election campaigns for the immediate purpose of winning legislative seats. In this sense, too, we urge the use of political action as a revolutionary weapon.

But both in the nature and the purpose of this form of political action, revolutionary socialism and “moderate socialism” are completely at odds.

Political action, revolutionary and emphasizing the implacable character of the class struggle, is a valuable means of propaganda. It must at all times arouse the revolutionary mass action of the proletariat — its use is both agitational and obstructive. It must on all issues wage war upon Capitalism and the state. Revolutionary Socialism uses the forum of parliament for agitation; but it does not intend to and cannot use the bourgeois state as a means of introducing Socialism; this bourgeois state must be destroyed by the mass action of the revolutionary proletariat. The proletarian dictatorship in the form of a Soviet state is the immediate objective of the class struggle.

Marx declared that “the working class cannot simply lay hold of the ready-made state machinery and wield it for its own purposes.” This machinery must be destroyed. But “moderate Socialism” makes the state the center of all its action.

The attitude towards the state divides the Anarchist (anarcho-syndicalist), the “moderate Socialist,” and the revolutionary Socialist. Eager to abolish the state (which is the ultimate purpose of revolutionary Socialism), the Anarchist and Anarcho-Syndicalist fail to realize that a state is necessary in the transition period from Capitalism to Socialism; the “moderate Socialist” proposes to use the bourgeois state with its fraudulent democracy, its illusory theory of “unity of all the classes,” its standing army, police, and bureaucracy oppressing and baffling the masses; the revolutionary Socialist maintains that the bourgeois state must be completely destroyed, and proposes the organization of a new state — the state of organized producers — of the Federated Soviets — on the basis of which alone can Socialism be introduced.

Industrial Unionism, the organization of the proletariat in accordance with the integration of industry and for the overthrow of Capitalism, is a necessary phase of revolutionary Socialist agitation. Potentially,

industrial unionism constructs the basis and develops the ideology of the industrial state of Socialism; but industrial unionism alone cannot perform the revolutionary act of seizure of the power of the state, since under the conditions of Capitalism it is impossible to organize the whole working class, or an overwhelming majority, into industrial unions.

It is the task of a revolutionary Socialist party to direct the struggles of the proletariat and provide a program for the culminating crisis. Its propaganda must be so directed that when this crisis comes, the workers will be prepared to accept a program of the following character:

- (a) *The organization of Workmen’s Councils*; recognition of, and propaganda for, these mass organizations of the working class as instruments in the immediate struggle, as the form of expression of the class struggle, and as the instruments for the seizure of the power of the state and the basis of the new proletarian state of the organized producers and the dictatorship of the proletariat.
- (b) *Workmen’s control of industry*, to be exercised by the industrial organizations (industrial unions or Soviets) of the workers and the industrial vote, as against government ownership or state control of industry.
- (c) *Repudiation of all national debts* — with provisions to safeguard small investors.
- (d) *Expropriation of the banks* — a preliminary measure for the complete expropriation of capital.
- (e) *Expropriation of the railways and the large (trust) organizations of capital* — no compensation to be paid, as “buying out” the capitalists would insure a continuance of the exploitation of the workers; provision, however, to be made during the transition period for the protection of small owners of stock.
- (f) *The Socialization of foreign trade.*

These are not the “immediate demands” comprised in the social reform planks now in the platform of our party; they are not a compromise with the capitalist state, but imply a revolutionary struggle against that state and against capitalism, the conquest of power by the proletariat through revolutionary mass action.

They imply the new Soviet state of the organized producers, the dictatorship of the proletariat; they are preliminary revolutionary measures for the expropriation of capital and the introduction of communist socialism.

Program.

1. We stand for a uniform declaration of principles in all party platforms, both local and national, and the abolition of all social reform planks now contained in them.

2. The party must teach, propagate, and agitate exclusively for the overthrow of Capitalism, and the establishment of Socialism through a Proletarian Dictatorship.

3. The Socialist candidates elected to office shall adhere strictly to the above provisions.

4. Realizing that a political party cannot reorganize and reconstruct the industrial organizations of the working class and that that is the task of the economic organizations themselves, we demand that the party assist this process or reorganization by a propaganda for revolutionary and industrial unionism as part of its general activities. We believe it is the mission of the

socialist movement to encourage and assist the proletariat to adopt newer and more effective forms of organization and to stir it into newer and more revolutionary modes of action.

5. We demand that the official party press be party-owned and controlled.

6. We demand that officially recognized educational institutions be party-owned and controlled.

7. We demand that the party discard its obsolete literature and publish new literature in keeping with the politics and tactics above mentioned.

8. We demand that the National Executive Committee call an immediate emergency national convention for the purpose of formulating party policies and tactics to meet the present crisis.

9. We demand that the Socialist Party repudiate the Berne Congress or any other conference engineered by "moderate Socialists" and social patriots.

10. We demand that the Socialist Party shall elect delegates to the International Congress proposed by the Communist Party of Russia (Bolsheviki); that our party shall participate only in a new International with which are affiliated the Communist Party of Russia (Bolsheviki), the Communist Labor Party of Germany (Spartacus), and all other Left Wing parties and groups.

Edited by Tim Davenport.

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